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Book Finally Issued Tells Story of '54 CIA Firing

By WARREN HOGE
Star Staff Writer

In a book first suppressed and now issued, a former CIA intelligence officer claims that the agency arbitrarily fired her 12 years ago to satisfy the whims of the late Sen. Joseph McCarthy.

In addition, she says, it was agency officials who successfully prevented the sale of the original publication of her account of the incident.

The writer, Sylvia Press, returned to Washington yesterday for the first time in a decade, eager to tell her story but insistent that she is not "anti-CIA."

The episode began, she said, one morning in May, 1954, when she received a telephone call directing her to drop everything and report to the agency's internal security division. At the time, she was a 12-year veteran in intelligence work and carried top secret clearance.

Security Investigation

Arriving at the division minutes later, she was confronted by two expressionless men who thrust two other officers' applications for employment at her and asked sternly whether she had signed them as a witness.

One signature was hers, the other not, she said, but it didn't matter to her examiners. This initial exchange was typical of the kind of questioning she was to undergo for the next seven weeks, she added.

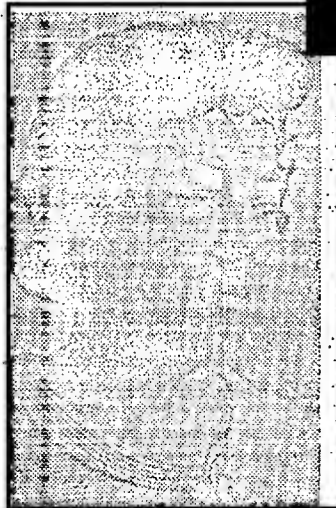
After the July 4 weekend, she reported as she had for the last seven weeks to the bare room in the security division. But that day there was no more questioning. A dismissal form citing her as a "security risk" rested on the table.

She demanded and obtained a meeting with the then-director Allen Dulles.

"What am I guilty of?" Miss Press asked. Dulles said she had not shown enough "candor." The phone rang, she was asked to excuse herself, and the conference was over, she recalled.

Wrote Book

In the next few years she wrote her book, "The Card of Devils," and in 1958 the Beacon Press agreed to publish it. With



SYLVIA PRESS

only the names altered, the work chronicles Miss Press' interrogation and dismissal.

But the firm took the manuscript and apparently printed it, Miss Press said, she never could find out what happened to the copies nor did she receive a penny in royalties.

The next time she heard from an editor was last winter when Esquire magazine called to tell her that a "source who is in a position to know" had informed the magazine that the CIA had suppressed the book's sale.

By this time Miss Press had become a public relations adviser in New York and had tried to put her CIA experience behind her.

In the May Esquire, Malcolm Muggeridge wrote a favorable review, which encouraged Bantam Books, Inc. to issue the book in paperback this last summer.

Miss Press still has little idea why she was singled out.

Dulles' comment about her lack of candor suggested one possible reason—that the agency objected to her having lived with a man years before she came to Washington in a common law arrangement as she cites in the book.

Soft-spoken and motherly, Miss Press now can relate her experience with composure. But she hasn't forgotten. "It was a terrible and hideous mistake," she said, "and I still hope someday to get a rehearing."

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